

laws Commission Government would not have a fair chance. I think it quite safe to say, however, that even if we are defeated, the cause has been greatly advanced, and it is only a question of time when the new method of administration will obtain in this city.

CHAS. E. FENNER.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

ANOTHER MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP "FAILURE."

Ceylon, Sask., Canada.

Your recital of the Manitoba telephone failure* suggests another government-ownership "failure" in Manitoba—the elevator system; a like effect, from similar causes. The moral of it all is to employ more trusty guards than a fox for your henhouse. Two years ago western grain growers in Canada were earnestly demanding government elevators as means of relief from extortion, but the most sanguine among them scarcely hoped to convince any Government without a vigorous and perhaps lengthy campaign. Imagine, then, the surprise of the Manitoba farmers in convention when they were called on by a member of the Roblin cabinet with a proposal to cooperate in the formulation of a plan for the Province to acquire a line of local elevators. The Grain Growers responded with suggestions embodying the results of their years of experience and study; but the Government had ideas of its own. The farmers soon saw that what Roblin wanted was not their suggestions, but their "O. K."

The bill finally brought down had a number of objectionable features, among the rest the power it gave the Government to interfere with the work of the Elevator Commission and to appoint or remove members on its own motion. Much time was spent and expense incurred in laboring with the Premier, but the bill was passed substantially in its original form, the grain growers' organization, however, declining to assume any responsibility for its success.

Though deeply disappointed, the organized farmers yet consented to nominate men for the Commission, on the promise that their work should not be interfered with. A very satisfactory Commission was chosen, and they proceeded at once to purchase and build elevators with judgment and economy. Then, with the farmers' mouths stopped, Roblin called an election and went back into power with tremendous majorities!

Once again safely incysted away from the troublesome voters, the Government took the purchasing of elevators into its own hands. It not only paid higher prices, but bought many that were antiquated, out of repair and badly located. In this way over \$1,000,000 was expended, and 174 elevators were acquired at about 100 points. These were used solely for shipping grain in car lots, as funds were not available to buy grain. So the chief sufferer, the small farmer with the wagon load, not only got no benefit, but in many cases his convenient elevator was taken from him and he compelled to haul to a more distant market. Good and experienced men

resigned from the Commission, and the system smelled of politics.

With this load to carry, is it surprising that the Commission complained of lack of support from the farmers and that the books showed a negative balance of \$125,000 in the two years of operation? The Premier conveniently blames the Grain Growers whose earnestly proffered advice he spurned at the beginning, but can he sidestep his own responsibility? It is a question whether his is a case of "after us, the deluge," or "whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." It is at least worth noting that it is in Manitoba that the Initiative, Referendum and Recall have made the greatest progress in Canada.

By way of contrast, those who point to "failures" of public ownership in Manitoba should consider the public telephone system of the adjoining Province—Saskatchewan.

GEORGE W. ATKINSON.

NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of *The Public* for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Monday, July 1, 1912.

The Democratic Convention.

After forty-two balloting for President of the United States, the Democratic convention has not yet made a nomination. Neither has a platform been yet reported to the convention. The unusual procedure of making nominations before adopting the platform was in response to the advice of Mr. Bryan, who explained—

that the candidate for President should be nominated before the platform is adopted, the convention being of unusual importance and the Democratic hope of victory depending upon its measuring up to the requirements of the occasion; that the platform would not amount to much unless the candidate stands squarely upon it and is able to defend it; that a joint debate between the platform and the candidate would be fatal to the prospects of the party; that by changing the order the convention would be able so to shape the platform utterances as to give force to the candidacy; that the unprecedented character of the proposal is justified by the fact that extraordinary conditions require extraordinary remedies; and that the suggestion that any candidate would be willing to stand upon a platform prepared by the convention is answered by the fact that the Democratic candidate eight years ago amended the platform by telegraph, a procedure which did not take well with the public.

[See current volume, page 608.]



When Alton B. Parker ascended the rostrum in the afternoon of the 25th to deliver the keynote

*See *The Public* of May 3, page 411.